

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 8946

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EGEN, PGOV, PINT, GR
SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH MINISTER OF COORDINATION PAPALIGOURAS

1. MILT KOVNER AND I CALLED ON MINISTER OF COORDINATION
PAPALIGOURAS SEPT 29, PRIMARILY TO GIVE HIM AND OUR NEW ECONOMIC
COUNSELOR THE CHANCE TO GET ACQUAINTED. MOST OF DISCUSSION RE-
VOLVED AROUND GREECE'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THE DIFFICULTIES
FACING THE COUNTRY IN BECOMING A FULL MEMBER OF EUROPEAN COMMUNITY.
TO ELICIT MINISTER'S VIEWS ON POLITICAL SITUATION AS ELECTORAL
CAMPAIGN BEGINS, I ASKED WHETHER HE THOUGHT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD
DECIDED TO HOLD ELECTIONS THIS FALL CHIEFLY TO GET THEM OUT OF
THE WAY BEFORE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS BECAME MORE SEVERE.

2. PAPALIGOURAS REPLIED THAT THIS WAS DECIDEDLY NOT THE CASE;
ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES HELD THIRD PLACE IN PRIME MINISTER'S SCALE
OF PRIORITIES. IN HIS INNER-CABINET DISCUSSIONS CARAMANLIS HAD
MADE CLEAR THAT HE CONSIDERS THE PROBLEMS OF THE AEGEAN OF
GREATEST URGENCY AND DANGER, THOSE RELATING TO CYPRUS SECOND, AND
ONLY THEN ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

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3. PAPALIGOURAS HAS BEEN DIRECTED TO TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN THE
NEW DEMOCRACY (ND) PARTY'S ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNING AND WILL REPRESENT
THE PRIME MINISTER IN MAJOR SPEECHES IN VOLOS AND MITILINI.
HE REALIZES HE MUST ALSO RECULTIVATE HIS OWN CONSTITUENCY WHICH
HE HAS VISITED ONLY ONCE SINCE THE LAST ELECTION. HE INTENDS TO
HAMMER AWAY IN HIS CAMPAIGNING THAT GREECE'S PLACE IS WITH THE
WEST AND THE UNITED STATES, AND OTHER ND CAMPAIGNERS WILL DO

LIKEWISE. HE DOES NOT ANTICIPATE THAT ANTI-AMERICAN OR ANTI-NATO ARGUMENTS WILL BE VERY EFFECTIVE FOR THE OPPOSITION IN THIS CAMPAIGN, PARTLY BECAUSE HIS PARTY WILL TAKE THE OFFENSIVE ON THE ISSUE.

4. COMMENT: I WAS SHOCKED AT THE APPARENT DETERIORATION IN PAPALIGOURAS' PHYSICAL CONDITION SINCE I LAST MET WITH HIM TWO MONTHS AGO. HE IS CLEARLY MORE OVER-WROUGHT, NERVOUS, AND UNDER GREATER STRAIN. HIS HANDS SHAKE MORE NOTICEABLY (INDEED HIS WHOLE BODY SHAKES), HIS FACE IS MORE DRAWN AND AGED, HE HAS DIFFICULTY HEARING, HIS CONCENTRATION FLAGS SO THAT HE SOMETIMES FAILS TO FINISH HIS SENTENCES, AND, AS ALWAYS, HE SMOKES INCESSANTLY. IN AN INDIRECT WAY HE COMPLAINED ABOUT THE NUMBER AND VARIETY OF HIS GOVERNMENTAL AND POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE DEMANDS THEY MAKE ON HIS ENERGY. NEVERTHELESS, HE GAVE US THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT HE STILL HOPES VERY MUCH TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER AND BELIEVES HE IS THE BEST QUALIFIED PERSON AVAILABLE WHEN THE JOB IS VACATED. HE RECOGNIZES THAT HE LACKS THE CHARISMATIC QUALITIES OF CARAMANLIS, WHOM HE CALLED THE ONLY TRULY NATIONAL SYMBOL ON THE GREEK SCENE, BUT HE LEFT NO DOUBT THAT HE CONSIDERS HIMSELF CAPABLE OF PERFORMING AS PRIME MINISTER.

MILLS

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